



Chatham County Comprehensive Plan Steering Meeting

Meeting Notes

February 18th, 2016

Attendees:

Andy Bailey, Board of Commissioner (BOC) At-large

Esta Cohen, Ag Advisory Alternate

James Fogleman, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Sharon Garbutt, BOC At-large

Kaylan Ghosh, Council on Aging Board

Linda Harris, Chatham Economic Development Corporation

Marcia Herman-Giddens, Board of Health

Tandy Jones, Ag Advisory Board

George Pauly, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Terry Schmidt, Environmental Review Advisory Committee

Caroline Siverson, Planning Board

Del Turner, BOC At-large

Jim Elza, BOC At-large

Amanda Robertson, Climate Change Advisory Committee

Staff:

Hillary Pace, Chatham County Planning Department

Jason Sullivan, Chatham County Planning Director

Jake Petrosky, LandDesign

Meg Nealon, LandDesign

Greg Payne, Economic Leadership

Cara Coppola, Chatham County Planning Department

Dylan Paul, Chatham County Planning Department

Linda Harris: We should have goals for new jobs, we should support a new tax base that appropriately zoned, and infrastructure easily accessible to various uses.

Jake Petrosky discussed purposes and uses of a comprehensive plan:

1. Purpose and Approach

- a. Assists with decision making (rezoning and investment)
 - i. The plan is not zoning but is helpful in rezoning it by providing clear guidance.
 - ii. Guide investment: county and state – parks and recreation, schools transportation, utilities.
- b. Addresses Community Problems and Growth Issues. Serves as a guide to reduce negative impacts of growth. Integrates economic development and builds on what has been done.
- c. Fosters efficient development of public services
 - i. It takes many single issue plans and integrates them into a multidisciplinary approach.
 - ii. It provides a roadmap to address issues.
- d. Preserves land values and protects investments.
- e. It provides for the health, safety, and welfare of the people, and impacts their quality of life.
- f. The plan creates a community vision.
- g. The plan meets legal requirements.
 - i. State law requires– zoning regulations must be made-consistent with a comprehensive plan.
 - ii. A land development plan is a requirement for the NCDOT Transportation Plan
- h. HOW DO WE ENVISION CHATHAM OVER THE NEXT 25 YEARS?
 - i. Role of the Steering Committee – guidance and oversight for project work as well as provide advocacy for the plan and to assist in public participation.

2. Key Components

- a. PHASE 1 : Report for BOC in April
 - i. Public Engagement Plan for key milestones will be outlined.
 - ii. A review of existing plans, policies, and studies will be conducted.
 - iii. Stakeholder meetings will be held in Feb 2016. Final Comprehensive Plan Scope will be prepared.
- b. Plan Elements
 - i. Economic development, utilities, land use, agriculture, parks and recreation, environment, transportation, housing, and community and health.
- c. Phase II
 - i. Comprehensive Plan
 1. Recommendation by element
 2. Future land use map
 - a. Sub area concepts/illustrations
 3. Other components
 - a. 15-501 market analysis (tradeoffs, what it can look like and where. We want jobs and tax base but not strip commercial character.
 - b. CIP Guidance (what projects recommended toward moving this plan forward within 2 years of adoption).
 - c. Fiscal Impact Analysis/Guidance (running numbers) (determined by phase 1))
 4. Public Involvement(individual outreach to individual interest groups – stakeholder interviews, community events, website, social media, public meetings)

3. Issues and Opportunities

- a. Residential growth pressure – demarcate county and Pittsboro jurisdiction where spillover affect or may absorb growth pressure.
- b. Jobs and Tax Base – Greg Payne reported the county has a low unemployment rate, a well-educated population, and an older population. Challenges are that 55% of the residents commute out of county for work.
 - i. The county overall tax base is 90% residential. Commercial and industrial development will shift the tax load. There is a need to focus growth on towns and cities.
- c. There will be an increased demand for county services including water and sewer.
- d. There is a need to maintain/enhance mobility.
- e. There is a desire to retain Rural Character and preserve local agriculture.
- f. Preservation of water quality and natural resources will require incentives and flexibility.

Discussion

1. Recent Accomplishments and Primary Issues

- a. Kaylan Ghosh – Chatham Park will be an economic and population opportunity or issue.
- b. Sharon Garbutt - Haw River Assembly has challenged the legality of energy and fracking legislation. Taking away local rights is a major concern.
- c. George Pauly – American Tobacco Trail has opened and is already overcrowded. People want trails they provide corridors, habitat, and alleviate transportation issues. The trail around Jordan Lake is in initial stages but hasn't been revisited, but should be. Two district parks have been implemented.
- d. James Fogleman -Silk Hope has to rent the gym. Sad that there is nowhere for kids to go. There are many acres in Moncure that could be developed. Chatham is growing, per capita income is 3rd. in state. This shows money going out. We need manufacturing in the county.
- e. Tandy Jones –A recent accomplishment is this planning process itself. The Recession resulted in a temporary pause in development and has provided an opportunity to assess what is happening. Agriculture is still the biggest industry in Chatham. Poultry is the biggest component, and it has also suffered in recent years. Although there is an aphorism that the best way to protect farmland is to have profitable farms, historically, residential development has been the greatest threat to farmland in Chatham. I think we should focus on the effects of development on farmland and agricultural infrastructure.
- f. Linda Harris – Voluntary Ag districts are an accomplishment. The county lost jobs but has grown small businesses. Two megasites are accomplishments. The biggest concern for infrastructure is that we don't have WIFI in the rural communities. Better coordination of food deliveries is needed to help farmers with market access.
- g. Esta Cohen –number of farms that have easements on them which keep the land permanently in agriculture. In order for farms to remain viable, underground water sources need to be protected. Increased traffic from subdivisions makes it difficult as well as dangerous to move equipment between fields.
- h. Caroline Siverson – Chatham should be a tourist destination – we have a creative class, artists (Siler City incubator). There is a mix of farms and country side with Jordan Lake and the Haw River – this should be a part of our economic development. There are bed and breakfast opportunities. Small sustainable farms, farmers markets and farm to table restaurants are also possible. She has concerns about cookie cutter developments in Cary.

Chatham has a green heart surrounded by an urban crescent.

- i. Jim Elza – countywide zoning is a major accomplishment – quarries and gun ranges had to be stopped – that’s not good. It has not been easy but we need to look back to see what we can do for agribusiness. Chatham needs a separate agricultural district to prevent residential incursion and encourage secondary farm income. Holding capacity analysis should be done to see how much land will be eaten up by development and to identify agricultural land to be preserved. Have to do something about fracking – cannot think about putting a pipe under Lake Jordan or a nuclear plant – even if the court has to decide. Infrastructure –water is extremely important – auto plant uses a lot of water and that is not good for us – trade off? Auto is just a game of money incentives. What kind of industry are we trying to attract? What is our skill and what do we have to offer?
- j. Del Turner - Affordable housing and workforce housing is an issue. Collaboration between schools and colleges can have an effect on economic development. This can be beneficial to tourism as well. The county should be looking at giving funding to municipalities for small businesses.
- k. Amanda Robertson– Chatham Park is a threat to our environment, culture and community. Our community needs to move forward with exemplar methods of sustainable development, which includes core areas of habitat protection with corridor connections between them. Developments of this scale should include community farms and identify farming lands. We don’t have the baselines for this monstrosity to guide our Comprehensive Plan because they haven’t been required to provide any analysis or research. No traffic impact analysis of Chatham Park for example. Jake-How do we account for something we don’t know? County wide conversation. Meg - at this large scale it is going to unfold over a number of years so it will be revisited – may see the character of the county evolve because of what this group appreciates. Jake – arts and culture as a piece of the puzzle – how will we deal with it?
- l. Jake Petrosky -How do we account for something we don’t know?
- m. Meg Nealon – A county-wide conversation will take place. Chatham Park is going to unfold over a number of years so it will be revisited – may see the character of the county evolve.
- n. Jake Petrosky – arts and culture as a piece of the puzzle – how will we deal with it?
- o. Jason Sullivan - Conservation subdivisions may choose to set aside 40% open space to get a density bonus –more open space. Two developments have chosen this alternative. County regulations from are not enforceable in Pittsboro or Chatham Park.
- p. Terry Schmidt – Environmental Resources Board in 2011 in preparation of the Chatham County Conservation Plan. GIS layers were used. Plan needs to be used updated as we move forward. He was shocked about politics in Chatham County especially when they are arguing with the same views. We need to address the two sides. People in western Chatham are mad about zoning. Gun Range no or way of life? He wants to make sure what we develop is not pie in the sky that it’s unattainable.
- q. Andy Bailey - Transportation model has been done, but housing and jobs are not included. Chatham is the only rural county that has a transit network and county support is a huge accomplishment but also a concern – not just to Chapel Hill but residents in the county that need this network. Another concern is 15/501 – if we don’t limit businesses – the road will die. If not connected to the rest of the network other roads will also die. There is a price if we do not plan for congestion. 90% of tax base not serving community. Get people to this county from borders and airport.
- r. Marcia Herman-Giddens – County Health Department is wonderful and strong – concerned with built environment – problems with obesity – needs for park trails, and safe places for

people to go. The tick issue is huge – 5 kinds that bite and infect humans with several different diseases.- Jordan Lake is an asset but needs water quality improvement. Trails not safe but possibly can be made better and free? Admission charge? Affordable housing is behind, more needs to be done. Tiny house movement – is an attraction – we could capitalize on this?! Ag and organic farms wonderful and need to be attracted preserved and enhanced. Fracking is bad and water is wasted and polluted with chemicals – we already don't have enough water.. High speed internet is needed– fiber optic.

- s. Amanda Robertson - Diana Hales newsletter discusses a fiber optic plan – dark fiber installed but not owned by anyone?)
 - t. Jim Elza - IT director presented plan with cabling – working on efforts to bring back to Commissioners – roll into comp plan discussion
 - u. Kaylan Ghosh – Council on Aging - older generation outpacing young generation.- Community infrastructure has to be age friendly, ADA compliant, with appropriate transportation, and accommodations.
2. Critical Success Factors
- a. Jake Petrosky - How do we know we succeeded? Running out of time but I think we have a good idea from what you all have provided. So if we address this we know are on the right track.
3. Branding/Messaging
- a. Sharon Garbutt – If we want to be successful it all must be accessible. Even if the public doesn't look at it – they want to be able to see it, so it's not secret. Major FTP site and website about the plan available in phase II – it is currently under development. The committee is a conduit for this process.
 - b. Del Turner – We have to spend money to make money – that's reality and its work. We need to explain this in messaging. Public Schools don't generate revenue but they increase property value.
 - c. Sharon Garbutt - Raising taxes becomes ok when the public-agrees with how it's being spent.
 - d. Andy Bailey – The county has not raised taxes since 2010. That's very good.
 - e. Esta Cohen – Discussion concerned taxes. Parts of the County are served by volunteer fire departments and first-responder services. There is limited awareness of those moving into subdivisions that these services are provided by volunteers, and so far as I know, they are not joining their local fire departments. Is there a known point at which volunteer services will need to change to paid services? Also in regards to potential tax increases: the County is responsible for the schools that will be required for Chatham Park.
 - f. Jake Petrosky - Fiscal ramifications. We need to be clear about these assumptions and choices. Doing nothing has fiscal impacts and doing something will also have fiscal impacts.
 - g. Marcia Herman-Giddens – is there teeth in this plan? What happens?
 - i. Jake Petrosky and Meg Nealon – The plan is a policy document so ideally there will be more teeth than the present. Statutes are clear, you need this document. If you stray from it –you must say why you are inconsistent with plans.
 - ii. Jim Elza – A finding of consistency is required every time a zoning decision is made.
 - iii. Hillary Pace - Capital investment plan – provides consistency fiscal impact analysis and level of service consistency. In order to justify improvements to transportation to DOT.
 - iv. Jason Sullivan – Consistency required in modification and changes to regulatory provisions.

Housekeeping

1. Election of Chair
 - a. Some members were missing, so this will be addressed at the next meeting.
 - b. Steering is a 14 person committee – alternates can speak but not vote.
2. Meeting Time
 - a. Meg Nealon – notebooks – please read them. Highlight goals/statements that you think are important. Think about other places – there are parts that you like – think of those things that inspired you – ideas that would translate well. Even bring us a picture to know what is appropriate.
 - b. Data list – please list someone that would be beneficial to talk to. Please include other organizations and large stakeholder names.
 - c. Homework via email.
 - d. Next meeting is 3rd Thursday of month (March 17th). There will be a report to BOC in April, but no meeting.